

A SHORT

DISCOURSE³ 4.

Concerning the READING

His Majesties Late DECLARATION

IN THE

CHURCHES.

Set forth by the

Right Reverend Father in GOD

HERBERT Craft.

Lord Bishop of

HEREFORD.

Published by Authority.

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HERBERT

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A S H O R T
A C C O U N T
Concerning the R E A D I N G
His Majesties Declaration
I N T H E
C H U R C H E S.

 When the Command for
Reading the Kings De-
claration came down first,
accompanied with the Petition of
my Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*,
and several other Bishops, humbly
A 2 pray.

praying to be excused from the Publishing those Declarations, I disputed with my self so long, that I grew into a perfect Agony at last, and could take no Rest all that Night. For two great Evils appeared before me, both contrary one to the other, and yet an absolute necessity of my falling into one of them, either Disobedience to the Kings Commands, or a Separation and Schism from my Metropolitan and other worthy Bishops, whose Judgments I truly revered in most things, and whose Integrity in all things. This made that Night very dismal to me, till at length, the day coming on, I got up and began to consider things with less troubled Thoughts, and more calmly and seriously to weigh the whole

whole Matter. And the first thing that represented it self unto me, as an Anchor to fix and hold fast my Soul, and compose my Conscience, was that saying, *Submit your selves to every ordinance of man for the Lords sake.* 1 Pet. ii. 13. and again *vers. 17. Fear God, honour the King.* This was said by St. Peter; who, we believe, was guided by the Holy Ghost, and therefore we take it as the express Command of God, and ought to observe it in every thing that is not flatly contrary to the Word of God, or, at least, most evidently deduced from the Word of God, so that every common understanding must needs see it. Now the King expressly commanding his Declaration to be Read in all Churches, without requiring him that Reads it.

it to declare either his Consent, Assent, Allowing or Liking of it, I would gladly know how any man can shew me that to do this is contrary to Gods Holy Word. If you say, that this Declaration contains a Dispensing Power contrary to the Laws of the Land, as is declared in the Parliament 1662. and 1672. Let it be so. Is it therefore contrary to the Word of God? Shew it me. If the King would vouchsafe to ask my Judgment, I would humbly and earnestly beseech him not to use his Dispensing Power in that high manner. And I farther call God to Witness that I would readily and checrfully lay down my life to Compose the miserable Breaches that are in these Nations on this account. But if after all, the King
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tells me, he hath this Dispensing Power inherent in his Majesty by Right, and will use it whether I will or nill; What can I poor wretch do? Or what can all my Brethren, the Bishops, lawfully do, but submit unto his Majesties Will and have patience? But, as a Paper lately come forth saith, In Reading this His Majesties Declaration in the House of God, I do thereby declare my Consent unto it: for I ought to Read nothing there but what I do approve of. Where doth he find this so exprest in the Word of God? Or from what Text doth it necessarily and evidently follow? Can this be as clearly deduced from thence, or is it as plainly exprest as that on the contrary side, that I am to submit to every

every Ordinance of man: This is the saying I stick close to, and require him to shew me out of the Word of God, that to read any thing in the House of God, is declaring my Consent unto it: and therefore his affirmation without some such proof from Scripture signifies nothing. Nay, to set Scripture aside, and to discourse of matters by common understanding: If I should read unto the people in the Church a Paper declaring that the King of *France* doth Persecute several Protestants, and deprive them of their Estates, doth my Reading this Paper any way declare my Consent to his Persecution? So, should I read a Paper in the Church declaring the Kings Toleration of Sectaries, doth it any way declare my Consent un-
to

to it? No certainly. This Argument is very frivolous and vain. But you ask me, why do I Read this in the Church? and I answer, because the King Commands it, and I know nothing in Scripture that forbids it, and therefore I am bound to obey it. But that Paper farther asks, if the King command a Popish Homily for Transubstantiation to be Read in the Church, would I read it? No certainly, unless I read it so as to confute it, and shew the absurdity of it. The Case is very different: this is a Doctrine I am necessarily to instruct the people in, and to shew them either the Truth or Falsity of it. And the Case is the same in all Doctrines taught in the House of God. But in Reading the Kings

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Declaration, there is no Doctrine Taught, only matter of Fact declared. But you will say, that was known before, and sure there must be some other intention in requiring me to Read it. 'Tis true, perchance it is to try my Obedience. And our Enemies having some guess by our late not giving thanks for that part of His Majesties Declaration, which was to maintain the Church of *England*, because Liberty for Dissenters was then also granted, that we will likewise refuse the Reading of the Declaration for the same Reason, and thereby displease the King, they therefore persuade His Majesty to require it of us. But for my own part I was then as urgent for our giving of Thanks, as a necessary
and

and grateful Duty; which, had we then performed, it would probably have prevented this Command of Reading it: which is likely to have a very sad Consequence, and I heartily lament it, but know not how to remedy it. Yet on this occasion I beg leave of my Brethren to tell them my whole Sense of this Matter. When the Kings Majesty first of all declared his Resolution to maintain the Church of *England* in the clear Profession of its Doctrine, with its Rights and Discipline, this was such unexpected and surprizing News, that I stood long amazed at it: and when at length I had Composed my Mind and settled my self in full belief of it, I did then also in all humble gratitude resolve to comply and

serve His Majesty in every thing that I could with a safe Conscience perform, and thereby preserve His Majesties most favourable intention and kindness towards us. And for so good an end as the free enjoyment of our Religion, and the True Worship of God to be publicly continued and defended, I was ready both then to give Thanks, and now to Read (in both which I see no apparent evil) and to perform such other things as shall be proposed, which shall appear unto me as harmless as I take them to be. Yea I confess I should yet go farther, and in doubtful Cases beg leave of God (as *Naaman* the Syrian did of *Elisha*, that when he bowed down in the House of *Rimmon*, with the King lean-

leaning on his Hand, the Lord
 would pardon his servant in this
 thing: so) that he would graciously
 pardon me in complying with His
 Majesty in some things, wherein
 there might be some shadow,
 though no real substance of Of-
 fence: and I should never doubt
 of Gods merciful Pardon in it,
 seeing I did it out of pure Obedi-
 ence to my King, upon Gods Com-
 mand, and to so good an end, as
 the preserving of Truth and Peace
 among us. Which if we lose
 on this occasion, they will have
 much to answer for, who are the
 Authors of it. Yet I verily be-
 lieve, and durst lay down my life
 for the Truth of it, that my Bre-
 thren who refuse the dispersing of
 these Declarations, are very far
 from

from having any evil intention in it; but will as readily Obey the King as my self, in what is as agreeable to their Consciences, as these things are to mine. And had I had the good fortune to have been amongst them at their Consultation, I should not have doubted of good success in persuading them to this business: which, although it comes now too late for this; yet by the Grace of God it may prevent some future evil accidents. However I resolved to publish it, to give as much satisfaction to the World as I can upon what reason I dissent from my Brethren, who, I am confident, aim at the same thing, though we go clean contrary ways unto it. And I most humbly implore His
 Graci-

Gracious Majesty to believe so of them, and not to give way to Passion, or to hearken unto those who would exasperate him against them: for 'tis impossible a True Son of the Church of *England* should have any Disloyal thoughts in his Heart, his Principles commanding him unto entire Obedience, either Active or Passive, without any Equivocation, or Mental Reservation in any Case whatsoever. And therefore a true generous Heart cannot but be kind and merciful to such submissive Subjects, according to that, *Parcere subjectis & debellare superbos.*

F I N I S.